

## BIRD PHOTOGRAPHY

Conducted by Alfred M. Bailey

There are two kinds of nature photographers. One secures pictures wherever no special effort is involved, while the other searches out difficult subjects and makes a serious attempt to obtain good results.

Many can not afford the time to picture very timid species or forms nesting in inaccessible places. Birds of prey are difficult, as a rule, for most of them nest in high trees or along precipitous cliffs. The photographer who takes such subjects would be classed as one who goes out of his way to secure the unusual.

There is much to be said for the man who totes a camera on a holiday trip, however, for he will often stumble over a rare chance to film an interesting subject. This was emphasized to me last week when Mr. Fred Lodge of La Grange, Illinois, telephoned me that he had a nest of the Killdeer with young just hatching. We loaded our motion picture camera in the car and worked our way through the Sunday traffic to an estate ten miles south of La Grange. We found the nest of the Killdeer upon a gravel bed at the rear of a garage, where trash had been burned.

Shrill cries of "killdee, killdee" greeted us and the beautiful little parent bird fluttered and flopped, uttering cries of distress as she tried to decoy us away. There were three gray-and-black, downy, long-legged youngsters crouched motionless in the little depression, while the remaining egg rocked slowly back and forth as the last baby tried to free itself. Anyone will recognize this as the chance of a lifetime, for young Killdeers leave the nest as soon as the down is dry, and then it is practically impossible to secure photographs.

We erected the blind within six feet of the nest, and I set up the motion picture machine, while Mr. Lodge and his son retired to a distance to watch operations. Within ten minutes the adult came swiftly across the gravel and crouched over the young. At the same time, I noticed she pressed against the remaining egg—possibly accidentally, and cracked it wide open. At least, she hurried matters materially. I made thirty or forty feet of film as the youngsters crouched under the wings of the adult, and then, desiring to secure additional pictures of her returning to the nest, I attempted to frighten her from the nest. I waved my hands, yelled, flapped the blind, and finally threw my hat in an effort to have her leave. All at no purpose. I finally crawled out of the blind, and even then the Killdeer seemed reluctant to leave. The camera was set up within four feet of the nest, without the use of the blind. The parent came back with little hesitation and hovered over the young while I ground out film in an extravagant manner for a museum man.

But we were not satisfied. The camera was moved to within two feet, and photographs were made which nearly filled the film, and then, while Mr. Lodge turned the crank, I slowly put my hand toward the Killdeer sitting with wings drooping over her babies, ran my fingers under her and lifted her from the nest. She showed little concern, even while I lifted her wings to show the contrast of the beautiful white feathers beneath with the brown of the upper parts.

We came away deeply grateful to the brave little Killdeer for the lesson in parental devotion, well satisfied that we had been favored by fortune. The accompanying photographic reproductions are enlargements from the motion picture film.



THE KILLDEER  
An Interesting Study in Protective Coloration



KILLDEER ON ITS NEST  
Both Pictures are enlarged from Motion Picture Films